Goal setting for young athletes

GOALS BY AGE

What a good goal looks like at each stage.

6-8 TRY

One thing, this week, about fun and effort.

EXAMPLE
Kick with my left foot.

PARENT ROLE
Ask what was the most fun thing they tried.

9-11 PRACTICE

One or two skills over a few weeks, in the kid's own words.

EXAMPLE
Hit the ball to the opposite field.

PARENT ROLE
Ask what they want to get better at, then write it down together.

12-14 BUILD

A skill plus a habit, tracked weekly, led by the athlete.

EXAMPLE
Take 50 extra swings off the tee, twice a week.

PARENT ROLE
Ask how they want you to help.

SKIP AT EVERY AGE

Goals written for them. Goals about beating a teammate.

Informed by Côté & Hay (2002) and Côté (1999) on developmental stages and how the parent role shifts, Bandura & Schunk (1981) on near-term goals for children, and Locke & Latham (2002) on specific goals with feedback. Age bands are adapted, not prescribed. General guidance for young athletes, not an individual plan.